Two Speeches at the Queen's Jubilee

London, 1897

By Whitelaw Reid

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TWO SPEECHES

AT THE

QUEEN'S JUBILEE

LONDON
1897

BY

WHITELAW REID

THE SPECIAL AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED STATES

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AMERICA AND ENGLAND

SPEECH
AT THE AMERICAN DINNER IN LONDON,
JULY 5 (FOR SUNDAY, JULY 4), 1897.

YOUR reference to the Special Ambassador is most kind, and I thank you. But we are in a sad mood, as you know, at the Special Embassy, and nothing but a sense of duty could have brought me, even on the Fourth of July and among Americans in London, to a banquet in the evening after following to the

grave in the morning the sole child of one of my associates. The brave Admiral's splendid war-ship bore for him no armor against fate; and recalling the proud pageant in which he has just been so worthily representing our nation, we can only utter again the exclamation of Edmund Burke over another suddenly yawning grave, "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!"

Let me venture to add what I know will touch every American heart, here and at home, that Admiral Miller, in his desolate loneliness this evening on the *Brooklyn*, has received a gracious message of tender, womanly sympathy from Her Majesty, the Queen.

It is an interesting coincidence that we pass immediately and not unnaturally, even in London, from the celebration of the Queen's Jubilee to the celebration of the Fourth of July. ["Hear, hear."] The one supplements and completes the other; the two together round out the record, warrant the recognition the world is extending to the progress of the Anglo-Saxon race, and emphasize the blessings its amazing advances have bestowed upon mankind. [Applause.]

Quite possibly, if the wise and good Queen had been in her grandfather's place, or if the Queen's son had been there, things might have been different. ["Hear, hear."] But it is far better as it is. The colossal

development of the Republic would have been possible on no colonial lines the world had then ever seen. Its benefits have been reflected back upon the motherland, and, under the improved policy that resulted, are distinctly traceable in the superb growth and affectionate loyalty of the vast British Empire of to-day.

We have been therefore, and we have had the right to be, proud of the Jubilee — almost as proud as the English are themselves; and as proud of the wonderful history that made it possible. We can have no jealousy of their greatness, their power, their world-wide renown. If it is not ours, it belongs to the family. [Laughter and applause.] They carry elsewhere what they gave us

— the same civilization, the same reverence for law, the same Anglo-Saxon love for order and justice and liberty; and they can take no right and lawful step to spread these blessings which we shall not applaud.

But let me not be misunderstood. The millennium has not quite dawned. The American has not abandoned the traits of his race any more than the Englishman. We are to-day the most peaceful great nation on the globe, and there was never a period in our history when there was less popular desire for territorial aggrandizement. But we are Anglo-Saxon still. [Applause.] It follows, of course, that our own clear rights within the legitimate sphere

of our influence will be jealously guarded; and that the consent of no other nation to our exercise of them will be held essential. [Prolonged applause.]

During the last week nothing has been more interesting than the evident English welcome to American sympathy, or the occasional remark, "Your people don't like us as well as we wish they did; why is it?" Well, perhaps there is sometimes some warrant for saying that. Sir Wilfrid Laurier talked very frankly on the subject the other night; and while not wholly accepting his point of view, I need add nothing to the explanations he gave.* It is idle to

*See extracts from Sir Wilfrid Laurier's speech, pages 26–30.

ignore the fact that from time to time serious differences have arisen. It is equally idle to imagine that either nation will fail to maintain what it thinks right. He is no friend to either who asserts or hints it. But we never forget our relationship. ["Hear, hear."] We may have family jars in the future as in the past. God forbid it; and God grant that if they do come, we may show that we are at last, on both sides of the water, civilized enough and Christian enough to settle them without fighting with our own blood. [Applause.]

Our people may perhaps be sometimes sensitive, and sometimes bitter. Possibly those traits of the race survive yet in England also.

But it is not best to attach too much importance to superficial indications. You do not judge a noble river entirely by the drift and eddies on the surface. Below, the strong, steady current is sweeping on in its natural course, unmoved by surface commotions. [Applause.]

Do not forget that out of the three serious wars of our national existence two have been with England, while in the third England's attitude was at least open to the interpretation Sir Wilfrid Laurier placed upon it. [Stir and sensation.] Yet such is the real temper of the American people that, when this last war ended in complete surrender, not one human life was sacrificed in punishment, nor were even political disabili-

ties long maintained. ["Hear, hear."] How easily any lingering bitterness over the first war, or any of them, may be swept away has been often seen. Surely, Englishmen cannot have forgotten Commodore Tatnall, who saw English sailors entrapped and slaughtered in an Asiatic sea, and without any possible warrant rushed to the rescue with the sole excuse: "I can't stand that; blood is thicker than water!" [Applause.] No more can Commodore Pearson be forgotten, who, under somewhat similar circumstances, did a similar thing. And surely English sailors, riding safely on the receding wave out of the terrors of Samoa, can never cease to hear the cheers, exulting in their escape, that burst

from the throats of American sailors about to die! [Prolonged applause.]

That is the genuine American feeling when stirred to its profoundest depths [Applause]; that the feeling which now warrants Whittier's prophecy of the time —

> When closer strand shall lean to strand,
> While meet, beneath saluting flags,
> The eagle of our mountain crags,
> The lion of our motherland. [Applause.]

That is the feeling that led the Chief Magistrate of our country to send me here, accompanied by an Admiral on his flag-ship, and by the General of our army [Applause], to bear from him a letter to Her Royal and Imperial Majesty.

It was that which gave me war-

rant, on behalf of the President and people of the Republic, to present personally their respectful congratulations and most earnest good wishes to the Sovereign, not merely of longest reign and widest sway, but, in their judgment, of most beneficent influence and best beloved in the whole long history of the English monarchy and the Anglo-Saxon race. ["Hear, hear."]

The President especially wished Her Majesty to believe that nothing can ever permit the government or the people of the United States to forget that at a critical period in their history, the preservation of peace between the two nations was, as they think, largely due to the gracious influence exerted by the

Queen, with the aid of the lamented Prince Consort. [Loud applause.] We may well hope that the memory of that act was not the least pleasant of the thronging recollections that added to the joy of this unparalleled anniversary.

Whatever the passing feeling of the moment toward England, there has never been a time within my recollection when England's Sovereign was not familiarly known in America as the "Good Queen" — never a time when she was not respected and admired — never a time since the *Trent* affair when she was not loved. [Applause.]

It was but three years before she came to the throne that Daniel Webster uttered his well-known

apostrophe to Great Britain: "A power which has dotted over the surface of the whole globe with her possessions and military posts, whose morning drum-beat, following the sun, and keeping company with the hours, circles the earth with one continuous and unbroken strain of the martial airs of England."

To-day Mr. Webster might phrase it a little differently. The Victorian era has spread out its glittering record of sixty years, and Great Britain is a power now which, instead of merely dotting, has largely overspread the surface of the globe. The sound which a week or two ago followed the sun and kept company with the hours, circled the earth with a sweeter strain than the martial airs

of England. It circled the earth with a strain in which the whole Anglo-Saxon race united, while the world applauded—the strain of "God Save the Queen." [Prolonged applause, the whole company rising and cheering.]

ENGLAND'S VISITORS

SPEECH
AT THE CORDWAINERS' BANQUET,
JULY 8.

THERE is a Scriptural approval, I think, for the man who said he would n't and then did. I trust the theological opinions of the Master and Wardens of the Worshipful Company of Cordwainers may be sufficiently liberal to permit the stretching of that approval to cover my present case. Having first flatly refused to speak, here I am speak-

ing [Laughter] — with no possible excuse excepting that I shall be brief.

Your toast "To our Visitors" means on this occasion, I am told, the Colonials and the Americans. One of our poets, who has met a quite extraordinary appreciation on this side of the water,—Mr. Walt Whitman,—once defined the duty you thus put upon me in another way. He said, "We celebrate ourselves." Now the Colonials may perhaps venture to undertake that task, but as for me, I hesitate at it. We have high authority — no less than that of the accomplished regular American ambassador here — for the assurance that our national flower, fitting America as perfectly

as the thistle fits Scotland, is the modest, unobtrusive violet! [Laughter and applause.]

There is another difficulty, and in this I know I may speak for the Colonials as well as for ourselves. We *are* visitors, of course; but we have to pinch ourselves to keep from thinking, all the while, that we are at home. ["Hear, hear."]

I may venture to speak for all your visitors on one other point. You have drawn out before us, day by day, a splendid historic pageant. You have had a wonderful and a worthy celebration of an anniversary altogether unique in the history of the world's civilization. But the finest thing you have shown us was not the brilliant military display,

here or at Aldershot. It was not that glittering procession of rulers and princes and nobles, of representatives of the four quarters of the globe, and of all their governments, that wound its stately way through millions of your people up to the steps of St. Paul's. ["Hear, hear."] It was not the colossal concentration of sea-power at Spithead, that proved how easily and how magnificently Britannia still rules the waves. It was not even the amazing order of London, and the magic control over surging thousands that lay in the gentlest wave of a single policeman's hand. Far overshadowing all these, the one great fact of the whole Jubilee was the obvious, the profound, the touching devotion

of the people—of all the people—to their Queen. ["Hear, hear."]

In this, too, no observer could fail to note that the colonies vied with the mother-country. Our friends the Premiers here are in some repects more English than the English themselves. They are proud, as they have a right to be, of their British origin and connection and loyalty. Long may it last! But they cannot escape their environment. Climate, circumstances, the struggle with the forces of nature and of savage man, have done their work on you as they have on us. You will not take it as unfriendly or uncomplimentary for a Yankee to say, "After all, what Yankees you have become!" [Laughter.]

Still, the race which peoples these isles is no doubt in some ways an unchanging one. Let us hope that, to whatever distant clime it goes, whatever fever in the blood may be engendered by pioneer conflict or tropic sun, it will always remain unchanged in those things which lie at the very foundation of all it has done in the world that was worth doing. I do not speak now merely of its liberty, and the watchful care that must preserve it. That is secure. All of our race are of one mind with our Yankee philosopher on that subject:

> For what avail the plough or sail,
> Or land or life, if Freedom fail?

But it is not freedom that has made our nations great. ["Hear, hear."]

It may be that there are in these very days of ours special reasons to remember that the mighty national structures we have reared would soon crumble did they not repose on the solid characteristic Anglo-Saxon virtues of morality, law, order, and equal justice alike to the richest and the poorest. The use of liberty is to guarantee and defend all these, and unless it does it is worthless, and must perish from the earth. [Applause.]

It is pleasant to see our Canadian neighbor here, from the province which gave such a stormy greeting to the young Queen sixty years ago, where now the swords of Montcalm and Wolfe, peacefully crossed, hang below the cross of St. George,

and with them the hearts of all Canada, French and English alike. [Applause.]

One of our writers had the temerity to describe the French Canadian as belonging still to the period of Louis Quatorze. He was mistaken. The French Canadian, as seen here to-night, belongs neither to the period of Louis Quatorze nor to the nineteenth century. What he really is is a twentieth-century American! [Laughter and applause.]

It may strike you as American brag when we speak of the Australians also as our neighbors; but it is n't. The geographical center of the United States is not near the Mississippi, as so many suppose. ["Hear."] It is not St. Louis, not

even Denver, in the Rockies. It is San Francisco. Measure eastward from that lovely harbor on the Pacific to New York, and measure westward to the extremest island belonging to the United States, and you will have traversed about the same distance. [Laughter.] But we would like to be a little more neighborly still. We hope that soon, "by and with the consent of the Senate," when the Australian comes sailing eastward home, he may feel that he is at least beginning to reach the estates of some of the family when, in mid-Pacific, the Stars and Stripes wave their welcome to him at Honolulu. ["Hear, hear."]

I am admonished that this toast to the visitors includes the ladies, but

some worthier person should respond to that, from whose tongue would come more trippingly what we all feel; and I shall venture but a word about it. We are very proud of the American ladies you are capturing and bringing over to England, but we are also getting a little uneasy. We value your appreciation, but we are alarmed at your acquisitiveness. ["Hear, hear."] We don't want to spare you so many, and if your conquests continue in the present progressive ratio, the prospect at home grows serious. [Laughter.]

I venture one word more — as respectful as it is sincere. The longest, wisest, most progressive, most prosperous, and happiest reign in the

whole long history of the English monarchy is that of the gracious Lady who now occupies the throne. God keep her there for many, many years yet to come. [Applause.]

From the Speech of

"THERE WAS A WAR IN AMERICA FOR THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY."

FROM THE SPEECH OF SIR WILFRID LAURIER, PREMIER OF THE DOMINION OF CANADA, HOTEL CECIL, LONDON, DOMINION DAY, JUNE 29, 1897.

YOU have stated that we share the continent of North America with a great nation of kindred race, but with which the relations of England have not always been of the most satisfactory character. Since I have been in England, within the last few days, it seems to me that I have found evidences not a few that there are perhaps in the minds of

public men in England, and not only in the minds of public men, but in the minds of the people at large, some apprehensions of a latent sentiment on the part of the American nation not altogether friendly to her mother land. I would say without any hesitation at all that the sentiment which prevails among the American nation is a sentiment of affection and of reverence, though unfortunately there still remain many causes of friction between the two nations. The memories of the unfortunate state of things which prevailed under the old régime and which led to the war of independence have not altogether been forgotten. The rancor created by the war is still living in the minds of the American people.

This might have been cast away, but unfortunately, as we know in our own generation, there was a civil war in America — a civil war waged, I am sure, in the minds of all men today, for as noble a cause as ever excited men to fight — for the abolition of slavery; yet it is a matter of history, strange as it may seem to us in these days, that at that period the

sympathies of the civilized world were not inclined on the side of the cause of freedom. If I may be permitted to speak my own mind — and I do so because what I state here I have often stated in my own country, and I do not know how to flatter — I have always said in Canada that the attitude maintained by England and by Canada was neither worthy of Canada nor of England at that time. But if there were a spirit of friction, rancor, and enmity at work at that time let me say at once that those enmities have been, to a large extent, removed by the conduct of the Queen of England herself. In the worst days of the war, when the opinion was prevalent in the United States of America that the English people were not as friendly to them as they ought to be, the opinion was also prevalent that the heart of the Queen of England was engaged on the side of liberty. In the worst days of the war, in a poem addressed to the English people by the most American of all poets, J. G. Whittier, while reproving England for her want of sympathy with a cause which has al-

ways been dear to the heart of Great Britain, he paid this warm tribute to Her Majesty:

> We bow the heart, if not the knee,
> To England's Queen, God bless her.

Only a few years later, at the close of the war, when the hand of the assassin struck down the great and wise man who had carried his nation safely through the awful crisis, the Queen herself, then in the first years of her own bereavement, sent a letter of condolence and sympathy to the wife of the martyred President. That letter from a widow to a widow appealed to the American heart. It brought tears to the eyes of strong men; it caused tears to stain the furrowed faces of many veterans. Sir, this letter of the Queen did more to erase the bitterness that had been caused by the attitude of the British people than anything else could possibly have done. There is more. At that time we did not know, as we now do, the history of the diplomacy on this matter, but we know now, thanks to the researches which have been made, that on

a previous occasion — on the occasion of the unfortunate *Trent* affair — when the sacred soil of England — because her ships are part of her soil — had been invaded by Americans to abstract forcibly from the soil of England men who were guests of England — when the dignity of England forced them to claim back those prisoners — we know that the hand of Her Majesty herself corrected the despatch of her foreign minister and erased every offensive word from it, and left it in such a state that it was possible for the American nation to surrender without any surrender of dignity.

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